

August 30, 1973

Dr. Joseph Fletcher
52 Van Ness Road
Belmont, Massachusetts 02178

Dear Joe,

I received your letter of August 27th just while I was putting the final touches on my introduction. I am enclosing a copy, and will also send one with a copy of this letter directly to Doubleday.

I really hope I can ^{dis}persuade you from putting the word engineering in your title. It has ugly connotations and is one of those loaded words that you deplore in your own writing. I would think that a title like "Ethical Parenthood? Weathering the Biological Revolution" would be just as catchy and yet not have such built-in prejudice. The idea of engineering humans is a just suppose story at this point, but there are many other very important issues that can be called engineering only by stretching the metaphor for purposes that have to be called marketing rather than enlightenment.

Your letter mentions computerized searches ~~of~~ bibliography. I was not aware that these exist for books and I would be interested in any information that you have about that. I have been trying to get Gene Garfield of the Institute for Scientific Information to extend his services from journal articles to books but it has not been a very plausible proposition so far. This is of course ~~not~~ argument against using a clear descriptive title.

I have not seen Knight's book and I am not sure it will be easy to get in the next few weeks, so if you can send me a xerocopy of what you refer to I would be grateful.

You ask about the book I am supposed to do for Doubleday. I had contracted with them some years ago to make a book out of the sets of columns that I had written for The Washington Post. However, the project was rather long delayed in their offices and during that interval a lot of time passed and I also had some second thoughts myself. So, I have been trying to tell them that that deal is off, that I think the time has passed for using those particular texts. They seem to have some trouble about getting my message, so perhaps my repeating it by copy of this letter may help clarify the realities on that one.

I am sorry to have raised so much trouble about a fee for this writing. I certainly did not want to put any of it on you. I was simply inquiring about what the usual practices were and their offers are entirely fair. So, I hope there are no more problems from that end.

I am holding on to your manuscript for a few weeks longer because I think I can offer you some additional detailed criticisms but I will have to wait until I get some more time for it. But as you did express some urgency about the introduction, I am sending that along immediately.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr
Enclosure